



Englewood Community Meeting #2 Proposed Closure of Harper, Hope, Robeson, and Team Englewood

January 17, 2018
Hamilton Park Fieldhouse
6:00-8:00 p.m.

CPS Staff in Attendance

Chip Johnson (Chief of Family and Community Engagement), Megan Hougard (Chief of Network 11), Julious Lawson (Deputy Chief of Network 11), Liz Kirby (Chief of Network Support/School Strategy and Planning), Jadine Chou (Chief of Safety and Security), Hope Sharp (ODLSS), Dee Haywood (ODLSS), Joanne Shaw (ODLSS), Luis Rodriguez (ODLSS), Sean Smith (SOAR), Erinn Boone (STLSS), Ernest Ilarde (Talent), Tiffany Taylor (Talent)

CPS Presentation

Start time: 6:01

Chip Johnson, Chief Officer of Family and Community Engagement in Education:

Chip Johnson addressed the crowd at 6:01 to begin the session. He asked everyone to take their seats. Before beginning, he noted that Englewood has always been a phenomenal community. He acknowledged that there are two sides to this proposal, and that the purpose of tonight is to hear the voices of both sides. He said it is important for the public to view this community debate in a respectful way. He asked the audience to represent the community well while sharing their passionate opinions. He noted that Dr. Janice Jackson is willing to listen. Mr. Johnson said that Liz Kirby, Chief of Network Support, as well as the Deputy Chief and Chief of Network 11 Julious Lawson and Megan Hougard, respectively, are in attendance. He also acknowledged the presence of Jadine Chou, Chief of Safety and Security, as well as Alderman Sawyer and Principal Sanders from Harper. Mr. Johnson also said representatives from the Office of Diverse Learners, the CPS Outreach and Re-engagement Centers, the Talent Office, and department for students in transition will be available for 30 minutes after the meeting. The contents of those conversations will not be captured in notes.

Mr. Johnson stated that anyone who is unable to share their comments tonight may do so at the cps.edu/transitions website. He shared that all notes will be available five days following the meeting.

Mr. Johnson stated that this is the second community meeting, and a public hearing will follow. The vote for this action will take place at the February board meeting.

Megan Hougard and Julious Lawson, Chief and Deputy Chief of Network 11:

Ms. Hougard thanked everyone for attending. She then covered the timeline of communication. The district engaged the public through the Englewood CAC for approximately a year before this proposal was announced. The CAC proposed a new high school. In June 2017 CPS opened a proposal for a new design of a neighborhood, open enrollment high school. When this proposal was opened a community driven steering committee was also formed. They discussed the transition plan and opportunity for a new school. The new school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2019. Over several meetings and visits to current schools, multiple options were considered, including closure at end of 2017-18 school year or multi-year phase out. The steering committee voted by majority for closure. The supports included in the transition plan for the action come directly from the recommendations made by the steering committee. Regarding student placement next year, she noted that students will not be assigned to a particular school, but rather individual student and family meetings will be held to determine the best fit. Supports also include safety plans and academic supports.

Ms. Hougard said that there has been a 75-80% decline in student enrollment over the last ten years at each school and that 92% of students go to schools outside of Englewood boundaries. There are 90-135 current students at each of the four Englewood schools. When the steering committee visited the high schools it was apparent that there are limited options for students in a highly under-enrolled school.

Mr. Lawson noted that in June 2017 CPS moved forward with the CAC recommendation to pursue a new state of the art high school. Should the board approve this proposal, it will open in the fall of 2019 with a freshman class only. He also noted that Sarah Goode and Dyett High Schools also opened with initially just a 9th grade. The school will include a strong partnership with Kennedy King College, a sports facility that will be offered to the community, and community health supports, among other resources for the community.

Liz Kirby, Chief of Network Support and School Strategy and Planning: Ms. Kirby stated that she was previously the chief of Network 11 between 2011-2015. She said she has insight into the challenges of highly under-enrolled schools. Ms. Kirby then discussed the supports provided in the transition plan. She underscored that \$8.3M will be invested in a 3.5 year transition program to provide social-emotional and academic supports to students. The purpose is to ensure that current students will be attending schools that connect with their purpose and meet their needs. There will be events in the spring, summer, and through the next few years available to students and families. Students who are diverse learners or in temporary living situations will receive specific supports. This summer will feature opportunities for paid summer work for students or academic supports. There will also be an opportunity for students to become acclimated with their new school this summer. Ms. Kirby noted that free CTA cards and expanded safe passage routes will be available beginning at the start of the school year. Ms. Kirby

also addressed questions regarding the finances, specifically responding to concerns from the last meeting. In the previous community meeting members of the public suggested that CPS should instead invest in the new schools by dividing the \$85 million among the four schools rather than build a new one. In response, Ms. Kirby covered the historical investments the district has already provided for these schools. She noted that the district made over \$4M in investments over the past three years at these four schools for programmatic supports. Additionally, Harper and TEAM received an additional \$6M alone for their academic programs. In capital investments, there was already \$29M provided to these four schools. This was an effort to help Harper, Hope, Robeson, and TEAM provide students what they need, but the reality is that significant under-enrollment provides immense challenges to programming.

Jadine Chou, Chief of Safety and Security: Jadine affirmed that safety is the top priority. Ms. Chou shared that currently 92% of students who live within Englewood boundaries are already traveling outside of Englewood for school. Therefore, the district has already begun to work through some of the transportation challenges. Simeon, Curie, and Hyde Park are examples of schools that are being attended. Ms. Chou ensured that every student will have an individualized safety plan. She restated that for everyone who is commuting there will be free CTA cards. She reiterated that safe passage routes will be expanded. Additionally, where there are CTA buses there will be staged buses so that there will not be groups of students waiting before and after school. Additionally, she stated that if a certain thresholds of students decide to attend a specific school, a shuttle bus could be an option. Adults previously expressed interest in this, but some students have questioned the social status of this option. Ms. Chou stated that CPS is willing to work through these solutions and that this is the beginning of the conversation.

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson acknowledged the attendance of state senator Jacqueline Collins, Craig Lynch, the President of Kennedy King, and Commander Kenneth Johnson from the 7th district of CPD. Mr. Johnson reminded the crowd of the 2 minute limit to speak. As more people entered the room, Mr. Johnson repeated that it is important to build up the community and that Englewood has a history of being an important community. Mr. Johnson stated it is important to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and that it is ok to agree and disagree. He stated that it is important to be respectful and represent Englewood well. Mr. Johnson then noted that a stenographer is present and asked speakers to line up on the outer aisle for the microphone. He asked speakers to state their name and spell it. He said the comments are public and will be posted. First, he asked speakers 1-5 to step forward.

Public Comments

Theoradrie Constanopolis, resident: Ms. Constanopolis stated that she is an Englewood resident for about 40 years and has a granddaughter in Randolph ES in 7th grade. She said she received guardianship of five grandchildren in 2011. She stated she is in favor of the new proposal. Before this she was considering high schools outside of Englewood, but the proposal allows her to consider Englewood as the

community neighborhood school. She stated she had to send one grandchild to Robeson and another to Harper, and that she had no other choices for them at that time. She stated that if she had a choice, she would have used it. She said the proposed plan is good because it gives the neighborhood something they can build on. She said that if we think with our heads instead of hearts then we will all realize that this is the best option for the kids because of the opportunities and supports it will provide. She said that although change can hurt it is important to think positive with this opportunity.

Asia Butler, President of Rage and Hamilton Park PAC and member of steering community: Speaking with two fellow members of the steering committee, she stated that they are resigning effective immediately if the steering committee is not restructured to include additional residents, educators, and parents. She noted that their entire steering committee meeting notes should be posted as is on the website. She then stated that although CPS states differently, all of the steering committee members did not vote in support of option one or two. She said the public has been misled.

Eddie Johnson: steering committee member: Mr. Johnson wanted to make clear that he and three other members had not voted at any time for the closure of any school, but they are in support of neighborhood high schools.

Lawrence Richard, resident: Mr. Richard stated that 36 years ago he attended Hope, which was a transition school. He said that 36 years ago there were similar fears and opposition. He said he doesn't see how it is feasible to keep the four school opens with such low enrollment. He is in favor of closure and opening. He is not in favor of how the Board conducted this business, however. He said that the Board had already decided a location, for example, before this was proposed.

Michael Buino, teacher at Harper: He stated that he has heard the comments people make about Harper and then defended the quality of teachers. He said that learning happens every day at Harper. He gave the example of their competitive theater program. He mentioned the accolades of both students and the school. He mentioned over \$260,000 in scholarships his students have won, as well as many of his students who are currently in college. He identified the many neighborhood and city events the students participate in. He said people should come to Harper to see all the good and then ask whether it should be closed.

Curtis Bynum: Mr. Bynum cited the example of how in 2008 CPS opened Miles Davis after combining two schools, but the enrollment at Davis remained low. He wondered how CPS knew enrollment would increase at the new Englewood HS. He also noted that the expansion of charter schools has led to declining enrollment. He concluded by stating that the district has shady business occurring.

Student, Hope: The student quoted Martin Luther King Jr. on the purpose of education. She then stated that it is clear CPS students are not receiving the education they deserve, but that CPS is to blame. She said it is not the fault of the school or teachers that CPS has not provided adequate funding. She called out all of the resources that other schools receive while her classmates lose resources. She said that CPS should provide new ideas, learning strategies, and resources that students deserve.

Ms. West, resident: Ms. West noted the history and legacy of the four high schools. She stated that it is important to hold on to that. She went to Englewood elementary schools but had to go outside of Englewood to receive rigorous high school instruction. She said that the community needs to “work the plan.” They need to cultivate generations of learners and work the plan to ensure it supports the students and community.

Gregory Jackson, teacher at Hope: Mr. Jackson was against the closure of neighborhood schools. He said he has been teaching for 14 years and feels like he is part of the fabric of Englewood community. He mentioned how many students he has seen to go on to be successful. When he heard about the closure, he was disappointed but was excited to hear about a new school. But he started to question it when he heard about the timing of the new school opening, the fact that current Englewood high school students wouldn’t be able to attend the new school, and that teachers and administration were not guaranteed positions at the new school. He talked about his students who come every day and ignore the distractions and said they deserve a spot in the state of the art school. He ended by saying that he is for the new school but only under the terms that all current students are guaranteed spots and that the schools are not closed until the new one is ready.

Darryl Smith, Harper graduate, spokesperson for Englewood Political Taskforce: He said that he is running for political office and that each of the schools CPS is trying to close lies within the district he is running for. He also stated that the \$85M should be invested into the schools to make them more attractive. He said students will not attend a school unless it is attractive. He said that this action is political. He said Mayor Emanuel wants to be re-elected and that CPS is protecting people who are in favor of

the proposal at these meetings. He said that the only reason he was able to be the 9th speaker was because he told registration he was in favor of the proposal, while his friend who opposed it had to speak much later.

Jamal Julian: Mr. Julian said that he does a lot of work with the youth of Englewood and advocates for walk-able and bike-able communities because they are healthier. But he said there has to be community access for healthy communities to exist. He is also a resident and parent of a high school student. His child will not be able to attend the new school because of the timing of opening. He continued by saying that Chicago has engaged in destabilization, privatization, and gentrification. He said the community has been victimized. He said he is not against the new school but that he is against the closure of the current schools because they current students at four schools will not be able to attend the new school since it is only taking freshman. He said that the Board needs to respond to community needs and not dictate to them what they want to do.

Willie Preston, Robeson graduate: Mr. Preston grew up in Englewood and went to Robeson. He said that he is against the school closings because of the identity they have in the community. He went on to say that the Board wouldn't close a school that had rich Irish heritage, for example. He said this is political. He said the school board belongs to the Mayor. He asked where Janice Jackson was and where the Mayor was. He said the community should rise up and get rid of them. He said that, by any means necessary, the Englewood community needs to stand up and rise against the leadership of the city and Mayor. He said the school is a part of the community.

Andrea Parker: Ms. Parker stated that she was disgusted that CPS is entertaining the notion of closing of neighborhood schools when selective enrollment will be the only remaining option in the neighborhood. She said it is unjust to close this school and then quoted Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote about injustice anywhere being a threat to justice everywhere. She talked about how closing schools sends a message that education is not a priority. She said it is better to reinvent existing schools rather than to build a new school. She said the system is racist has humiliated her and that the black community is always the victim of these decisions. She asked how many schools in African American communities must be shut down before people recognize that this is a racist practice and system.

Lawrence Wagner, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless: Mr. Wagner said he is against the closure because closing the schools will have a disproportionate impact on homeless students. He quoted a statistic of how homeless youth will be negatively impacted and that attendance and relationships will be impacted as well. He also said

that the current proposal is unfair because current students cannot attend the new school. He cited a study from 2015 that only students who attend substantially higher performing schools after a school closes will have better outcomes. He said that if the new school is not substantially higher performing then students will not benefit. He also said the timeline for closure is unrealistic. He cited the action items that have January 30th deadlines as an example.

Erica Clark, Parents for Teachers: Ms. Clark stated that she is 100% behind parents, teachers, and students who are fighting to keep the schools open. She stated that she is tired of hearing about under-enrollment. She said charter enrollment went up while enrollment at these four schools went down. She claimed this was part of a systematic plan to destabilize the community and drive black and brown families out. She cited the families and students who are fighting for the schools as worthy reasons to keep the schools open. She questions why Englewood couldn't have the new school and keep the current schools open. She used Lincoln Park as an example, saying that the Mayor found \$20M to build an addition that parents didn't want. She said actions like the Englewood proposal are policies that are only forced on black and brown families. She said you can't build up one child by tearing down another.

Errika, parent: This parent said that security wasn't going to let her speak at first. She said that one of her daughters went to Phillips and is now in the Navy. Another one of her daughters is currently at Harper. She said that the namesake of Harper would be disappointed. She asked for more funds for resources, teachers or special education. She said her vision is to help the students. She said that CPS and that city can't take away something and then try to add something. She said that it would be better to at least leave one building open. She said her kids will not participate in the new school.

Clifford Phils, parent of Englewood graduates: Mr. Phils said that he is parent of four graduates of Englewood high schools. He said he is against the closure. He drew the analogy of playing cards and shuffling. He said CPS is shuffling the kids. He then stated that closing a school is a "no no" but building kids' morale is a "yes." He said kids need somewhere stable. He said that if you are going to tear down a building then the new building should be built in its exact space. He said that Englewood should not support the Mayor and the Board of Education.

AR, student at Harper: The student questioned how CPS can talk about helping Englewood but also talk about closing schools. She questioned how kids can have a better education without funding and resources. She questioned how people without kids in the Englewood schools can be making this decision. She said CPS is taking

money away from the Englewood kids, teachers, and community. She said this is impacting students' education in Englewood but not the education of the decision makers' children. She said that CPS is essentially saying students who attend the schools are incapable because CPS claims that past investments haven't helped. She said that CPS needs to invest in their education.

KC, student at Harper: She said that current students act like they don't care about the proposed closure but they really do. She said that CPS is trying to run the students out. She said students have protested the cuts and admire their teachers.

Speaker: He said that the audacity to close all the schools in one community is gentrification. He emphasized that the decision to close all the schools is wrong.

Greg Goodman, teacher at Lindblom: He asked the audience to raise their hand if they attended the last meeting and said that the news showed that there was division in the Englewood community. He then claimed that there was more unison than the news realizes. He asked the audience to raise hand if they agreed with statements such as the need for equitable and rigorous education and the same level of investment into Englewood as other Chicago neighborhoods. There was broad agreement in the room. He also said that it's wrong for the city to defund Englewood and to remove all current 8th graders and current high school students out of their neighborhoods for the remainder of their high school experience.

DB, student: The student said that Chicago has a disrespectful mayor who doesn't listen to anyone. The student then said it was wrong for people in Englewood to switch sides or be silent. He said that the CPS team is telling lies to students. He questioned how there could be so much money to build a new school but not enough money to invest in the current schools. He then stated that he and his fellow students will fight to keep his school and all the schools open.

Bobbi Brown, LSC chair at Harper: Ms. Brown said she is against closing the schools and that she is tired of other people telling Englewood community members what to do. She said some people have already switched sides in the debate and that others still can. She then said that the Mayor cannot be trusted. She said the devil is a liar. She said that the schools and the community members are free. She declared that the schools will remain open.

Betty R., resident and graduate of Harper: The speaker said that when she attended Harper there were options and resources for students. She then called out paid protesters who she believed to be present. She also said that the city needs to build up the community and not tear it down. She said shame on Englewood residents who support the new school. She also called out the Mayor, stating obstruction of justice. She said citizens can resist and that they can shut down the next election. She said to lock up the politicians and get them out of their seats until they actually do something for the community. She stated that she previously volunteered for a politician and knows they do not give back or care about community members.

Speaker: The speaker agreed with the previous speaker. She encouraged students to show up at their schools next fall even if they are closed. She said they (the students) are going to attend a neighborhood school even if CPS doesn't want them to. She said that it is ok to build a new school but that the current schools need to remain open. She said the Mayor needs to be out of office and that people need to register to vote so they can remove the current politicians. She questioned how Janice Jackson could not be present to hear from community members first stand. She concluded by saying that if the Board closes the schools everyone should still show up to them next fall. She then said again that the Mayor needs to lose in the next election. She said not to forget Laquan McDonald and the cover up. She said the police keep killing the residents.

Rachel Williams, Hope graduate: She stated that the city has disinvested from the community. She said that the city and CPS are responsible for the under-enrollment and current situation. She cited the housing in the area as an example, specifically how the city has not invested in residential housing in the community. She said they have divested in the school too. She cited examples of teachers and administrators who were forced out because of cuts. She then stated the Hope motto: Excellence without Excuses. She said that if the Board cuts funding and disinvests then the Board is doing a disservice to students. The Board can't expect the community not to fight back.

Mosias Harris, brother of a resident, Lindblom graduate: Mr. Harris questioned how CPS could close all the high schools. He asked the Board if they were treating the Englewood students as they would their own, specifically stating that the current students wouldn't be able to attend the new school because of the timing of opening. He said that's wrong. He also said change doesn't have to hurt. He then concluded by asking whether the new high school would be the kind of school that a Board member would want their child to attend. He said it's clear that the new school is already being built and that the deal is done. Therefore, he said the community needs to make sure it serves the people.

Jasmine Cellis: Ms. Cellis said she was against the closing and that this is about politics. She said there are racist politicians who spend money on settlements and cover ups rather than their communities. She cited Jon Burge and his department. She said the city has spent \$111M on those settlements alone. She said the Mayor has not invested in black communities. She said that city has covered up the murder of Laquan McDonald. She said the city intentionally created conditions of under-enrollment at the four schools. She said the Mayor does not support black communities or black teachers. She said the closure of the schools is an example of systemic racism. She said this is a false choice. She said the administration has no problem spending money on the initiatives that support the people closest to the Mayor.

Jackson Potter, CTU: Mr. Potter is against the schools closing. He was a teacher at Englewood HS from 2002-07. He told the story of his former students and how one of their younger brothers had to drop out of Robeson after Englewood HS shut down because of safety concerns. He said the prospect of safe passage existing 5-8 miles outside the community is unrealistic. He said that the children of Englewood deserve the same thing that the Mayor's kids receive. He said that the money could be invested in the schools or the community. He concluded by saying that the community must hold the politicians accountable

TO, Harper student: The student said that Harper is part of his family. He cited the success of Harper students who were Posse Scholars and Gates Scholars. He said that it is wrong to say that Harper is a bad school. He said students learn every day at Harper. He said that students want to learn. The student stated that he is against the schools closing. At the least, he said that even if three schools close at least one should stay open. The schools would be combined in this case. He said the community can fight back. The student said he initially was excited about the new school until he found out that he wouldn't be able to attend it. He said the Board is putting his life in jeopardy and not thinking about his life (playing on the basketball team, keeping friends, etc.). He concluded by saying that these schools are the future of Englewood.

Student: The student questioned how the Board can think the new school will be successful when it is the same students that will be attending it. He also questioned the decision to close the 1+ elementary school in the south loop. He said that if you put "bad apples in a new basket" it won't change anything. He said that the students won't change just because of a new building. He said it's best to put the money in the schools in order to reconstruct relationships and students' minds.

Drew Heiserman, former teacher at TEAM, current Lindblom teacher: He said that high schools are pillars of the community. He mentioned how the former Englewood high school has been destroyed over and over again. He said Robeson was a pillar, as was Harper and Hope, but the Board wants to tear these down. He said that when he was at TEAM they saw disinvestment and fought against it. He questioned the statistics that said 92% of students within Englewood boundaries are not attending. He said that means there are a total of 5,000 Englewood high school students who could be attending the current schools. Therefore, we need to invest in the current schools.

Evelyn Johnson: Ms. Johnson said the city has disinvested in the community. She said that if the audience agrees and believes that the city fails to protect their children, and if any individuals had voted for anyone in the city council, then they have the right to join together and create a class action lawsuit for breach of contact. She said she already has the lawyer who will represent the community. She said this is a solution for the community. She concluded by saying that she has four generations family invested in Englewood, some of whom have died. She said they she believes it was the city, not gangs, who murdered her family members.

Keith Harris, president of Englewood political taskforce and member of PEAC organization and Robeson graduate: Mr. Harris asked how many people would allow him to come into their house and let him move around the furniture without their permission. Therefore, he asked why would the community would allow CPS to come and do this to them. He said the community has the power to fight back. He said tell your neighbors and stated that CPS has not been listening to community and has been lying to the media about community involvement. He said Englewood is a strong community and that the community owns it this decision. The community should tell the Board, not vice versa. He suggested that CPS find a way to keep the schools open or people won't have jobs.

ME, student at TEAM: He said that what the Board is doing is wrong. He said it is wrong to close down all four schools. He said that he has formed friends and that his principal has helped him become a strong and confident young man. He said that the schools are important. He said Englewood is family. He said it doesn't make sense that CPS wants to do this to them.

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson announced that the public comment section has now concluded and that there were no more registered speakers. He stated the address and date of the public hearing. He said that there is ten more minutes and if people want to register they may do so and then come speak again in these ten minutes. He said that

the audience must register before speaking. He said January 30th is the date of the public hearing at 42 W Madison. He then announced that there was one more speaker who registered.

Alita: She said that the money needs to be used properly, but most importantly that this is a great opportunity to unite as a community. She said that the Mayor is against them. She said they need to protest when they try to shut down the schools. She said CPS can find the money to invest as much as needed. She questioned the investment in a new building for the Chicago Police Department but not for Englewood kids. She said the community needs to come together. She said that the plan is already written, that the new school is being built. She said that the community can at least prevent the current schools from being closed down. She said the money should be invested so kids don't have to go elsewhere to receive this world class education. She said counseling is critical. She concluded by saying that CPS needs to invest in counseling and mental health because kids come from trauma.

Ronald Jackson: Mr. Jackson said that the alderman had a meeting about special education at 2:30, specifically when parents wouldn't be able to attend. He said alderman is here tonight because he wants to be elected. He said the alderman knew about the cover ups. He said that the community needs to get these politicians out of office. He said the aldermen are sellouts and that the Board is also trying to close a level 1 elementary school. He then said no charter schools are closing except possibly two. He also stated that programs have been removed from the current schools and that previously closed schools haven't been secured and kept safe. He suggested that anyone who supports the new school must not have kids in the current schools.

Speaker: The speaker acknowledged earlier speakers who he agreed with. He said schools in other neighborhoods don't get shut down, and that the plan being put on the community is insidious. He said the community should come together around the kids and then referenced a statistic: he said that students who are currently five are being studied because 75% of kids who can't read at a 5th grade level by the time they are 10 years old will be in prison. He said the city is studying children in order to know how many prison cells to build. He said they are closing the schools on purpose.

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson thanked the speakers and then stated that a woman tried to speak at the end but had not registered. She continued to try to speak but the meeting concluded at 8:00, as she had not registered. There were no further registered speakers.

End time: 8:00